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SIPDIS

HOMELAND SECURITY FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KPAO](#) [KPLS](#)

SUBJECT: THE SILENT MAJORITY: CANADIAN OPINION OF THE U.S.  
AND THE WAR IN IRAQ

Ref: a) Ottawa 723; b) Ottawa 917 (C); c) Ottawa 1014; d)

Quebec 51 (NOTAL)

1. Summary. Ambassador Cellucci's public expression, March 25, of U.S. "disappointment" over the Canadian government's posture on the war in Iraq has led to an outpouring of response from the general public. Since the speech, public opinion polls have consistently shown growing public approval of U.S. action in Iraq. Other anecdotal evidence, including public demonstrations and write-in campaigns to the Embassy, suggest far greater support from Canadians for the U.S. than could be inferred from Canadian media reports and government statements. These indicators, however, show a divide between Anglophone Canada and Quebec, where a majority continue to oppose the war (reftel d), in part because much of their news comes from France. End Summary.

PUBLIC OPINION POLLING - GROWING SUPPORT FOR THE U.S. IN  
ANGLOPHONE CANADA.

2. The latest Ipsos-Reid poll, conducted April 1-3, shows a majority of Canadians outside Quebec (54 per cent) support U.S. led military action. Not surprisingly, Albertans are the Canadians most likely to express support for the U.S. (62 per cent); they are followed by residents of Saskatchewan/Manitoba (55 per cent); Ontario (54 percent); Atlantic Canada (53 per cent); and British Columbia (51 per cent). Nationally, Canadians are evenly split, with 48 percent supporting and 48 per cent opposing the U.S. led war in Iraq. In Quebec, however, only 29 per cent express support for the war in Iraq.

3. A separate poll, conducted April 4-6 by COMPAS for "The National Post," confirms this trend in public opinion. The COMPAS poll finds that 72 per cent of Canadians "believe Canada should have supported the U.S. at the start of the war." That figure breaks down into 41 per cent who believe Canada should have given "verbal support" to the U.S. at the beginning of the war; and another 31 percent who say that Canadian support should have included a commitment of troops as well as verbal support. However, a much smaller majority, 56 percent, agree with the original U.S. decision to invade Iraq.

OTHER INDICATORS OF SUPPORT FOR THE U.S. - PUBLIC  
DEMONSTRATIONS.

4. Since the invasion of Iraq, public demonstrations have been common in many of Canada's major cities. Ottawa has witnessed regular anti-war and anti-U.S. demonstrations. Typically, those demonstrations have convened on Parliament Hill about noon on Saturday and circle the Embassy throughout Saturday afternoon. The demonstrations of March 29 were far different. Despite a cold, steady rain, a group of 4,000 to 5,000, the largest since the onset of combat operations, rallied on Parliament Hill to demonstrate support for the coalition, with U.S. and UK flags on prominent display. This contrasted with about 500 anti-war demonstrators who appeared near the Embassy. On the same day there were also large "friends of the USA" demonstrations in Calgary and other communities in Alberta March 29. A similar pro-U.S. rally drew about 4,000 in Toronto April 5 during one of the worst ice storms of the season.

LETTERS FROM THE PUBLIC TO THE EMBASSY.

5. Following Ambassador Cellucci's speech in Toronto, the Embassy was deluged with calls, e-mails and letters from the public. Initially, the mailed letters were overwhelmingly supportive of the U.S. position, while electronic messages were largely critical. In the past week, those communications have been more nearly balanced. To date, the Embassy in Ottawa has received close to 600 letters supporting the U.S. and about 450 that are critical. The Embassy in Ottawa has received about 150 e-mails that are supportive and about 250 that are critical.

COMMENT.

6. The polling data and the public response indicates there is more of a "silent majority" of Canadians outside Quebec,

that supports U.S. action in Iraq than would be supposed from Canadian media coverage and commentary. The polling data and public response also reinforce our observation that on this issue, Canadian media reporting and commentary are significantly driven by official Canadian government statements and by statements from the Liberal Party caucus.

17. As for Quebec public opinion, a leading Quebec pollster suggested that Quebecers receive a significant portion of their information from French sources. TV5 is available on the ubiquitous cable channels, and Agence France Presse is frequently used by the Francophone media. Given the sharply negative French take on Iraq, this pollster thought this accounted for at least part of the divergence with the rest of Canada.

18. One thoughtful media pundit suggested that there is a large segment of the Canadian public who, whether or not they support Canada's direct involvement in the war, are deeply troubled that Canada is not supporting its two traditional allies, the U.S. and the U.K. How these sentiments of the public may affect substantive Canadian support for large-scale humanitarian assistance and reconstruction efforts in Iraq remains to be seen. END COMMENT.  
Cellucci